

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

July 29, 2013

Dear All:

I am pleased to welcome U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman to Maine and to the world-class New Balance facility here in Norridgewock. I regret that I cannot be with you, but as the Senior Republican on the Transportation and Housing Appropriations Subcommittee, I am on the Senate floor, managing an important funding bill. In addition, the Senate will be voting this afternoon, and I feel an obligation to be present for these votes. I wish that I could be with you, but I know that the impressive New Balance operation speaks for itself.

I met with Mr. Froman prior to his confirmation and expressed my strong conviction that a fair trade policy is imperative to maintaining and increasing the number of good manufacturing jobs in Maine and the rest of the United States. There is no better example of the impact of trade decisions than New Balance's ability to provide nearly 900 good jobs in our State.

Today, the Ambassador will have an opportunity to visit an innovative manufacturing facility that I have also visited several times. Most of all, I am sure that he will be impressed by the dedication and craftsmanship of every man and woman who works in this New Balance facility and others across Maine.

Due to its innovation, superior customer service, and strong investment in the American worker, New Balance has maintained domestic production when many others have closed up shop and moved overseas. New Balance has worked hard to keep jobs in Maine and the United States, despite strong overseas competition. Today, domestic footwear production accounts for more than 4,000 U.S. jobs, including approximately 900 jobs at New Balance's facilities in Maine. These jobs, however, depend on the ability of American firms to continue to compete on a fair playing field in the global market.

It is Ambassador Froman's job to negotiate aggressively and implement a trade policy that honors the commitment of the workers at this facility, who fulfill their end of the bargain when they perform their work with painstaking precision and quality control.

As negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement continue, a principal objective for the United States must be to maintain the existing footwear manufacturing jobs here in America. The United States must not pursue – or agree to – any changes to long-standing duty rates that could endanger that goal by giving footwear imports from countries with low hourly wages, such as Vietnam, an overwhelming competitive advantage. Instead, an agreement must be reached that recognizes how these duty rates – in concert with the continuing innovation of manufacturers – help preserve American jobs.



In addition to the importance of trade policy, the federal government can also use its purchasing power to buy goods and services made right here in America, including running shoes. Right now, some military service members are issued shoes that are not made in America; this is why I invited Under Secretary of Defense Frank Kendall to visit a New Balance facility in Maine, and why I have been assured that procurement officials from the military will follow Ambassador Froman's lead and tour a New Balance facility in Maine later this year. This is also why Senator King and I have introduced a bill to close a defense acquisition loophole to further support domestic footwear manufacturing. So that no matter where on the globe our troops are, they can be sure their footwear is made in the U.S.A.

Maine has a long, proud history of manufacturing. I am confident that Ambassador Froman will leave here with a greater appreciation for the pride that Mainers have in their work and the contributions the footwear industry and every worker make to Maine's economy. I encourage him to pursue trade policies that will enhance, not undermine, this proud tradition.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator